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The Meanings of *But*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the word *but* in relation to its possible grammatical categories and semantic roles. Historically, *but* used to mean ‘except’, and its meaning has evolved through the years, and research convincingly demonstrate that present-day *but* can be analysed and classified according to its meanings. This paper examines the diverse meanings of *but*, even if they are considered archaic. A second objective in this paper is to find the most appropriate translation into Spanish for each form of *but*, whose translations will be put forward depending on each semantic role taken by *but*. Firstly, an introduction to this topic with the basic information about *but* will be presented in Section 1. Then, more detailed information and analyses will be provided in Section 2. This mentioned section is divided into four subsections where *but* will be studied depending upon its grammatical categories and its semantic roles, followed by a list of idioms in order to successfully comprehend the totality of the meanings of *but*, and concluding with an examination of its possible translations. To finish with, a conclusion of this paper will be drawn in Section 3, where further research will be put forward. Hence, this paper is an explanatory list of the grammatical and semantic information of the word *but*.

Keywords: *but*, conjunction, contrast, semantics, translation.

1. Introduction

The word *but* is commonly known as a conjunction. It is widely claimed to be used in order to provide contrastivity in a proposition. Nevertheless, *but* is able to take the role of a contrastive conjunction, as well as multiple lexical categories and uses. Taking into consideration the following examples, *but* is clear to be more than a conjunction. In instances 1) to 4), possibilities about the functions of *but* can be found, albeit there are more meanings which are going to be shown and explained in this thesis.

- 1) All but the captain were rescued (Quirk et al., 1985: 707)
- 2) John is rich, but he is happy (Quirk et al., 1985: 935)
- 3) No buts—just get out of here (Oxford Dictionary)
- 4) She all but kissed us (Quirk et al., 1985: 598)

In each sentence, *but* has a different function and a different category. In the case of 1), it is a preposition, and *but* takes this role as a substitution of *except*. On the other hand, 2) is the regular form of *but*: a conjunction. Following this, 3) as a noun. Finally, in 4), *but* is used as an adverb, more specifically as a subjunct. Other categories which are possible to be found in *but* will be shown in this thesis.

To start with, *but* has been historically used dissimilarly. According to the Oxford Dictionary, *but* diachronically comes from the Old English word *būtan*, meaning ‘outside, without, except’. Subsequently, in Present-day English, linguists such as Lakoff (1971) and Blakemore (1987, 1989) maintain a united front on *but* having two semantic roles: contrastive *but* and concessive *but*. The former is used to contrast two propositions which are semantically related, as 5) below shows. The latter applies to a presupposed proposition originated from the first proposition, as can be seen in 6).

- 5) Tom is poor, but John is rich (Izutsu, 2008: 653)
- 6) She's a linguist, but she's quite intelligent (Blakemore, 2000: 475)

Nevertheless, Izutsu (2008) draws attention to another meaning of *but* beyond the contrastive and concessive uses, which is the corrective use. In her work, this new role is made up of a proposition which is contradicted and eliminated by the other proposition; in other words, the rejected proposition is replaced by a valid alternative, as can be seen in 7). These three uses of *but* will be explained and analysed in more detail in this thesis, as well as idioms such as *but nevertheless* and *but then*. What is more, a fourth meaning might be considered. Muñoz de la Nava (2016) postulates that *but*, when it is placed at the beginning of a sentence or in the second conjoint in a sentence which begins with *not only*, cannot fall in any of the other three categories, and argues for this different category, which she calls *but*₄, to be considered an adversative coordinator, although it is more appropriate to label it as a correlative coordinator. Instance 8) illustrates this role.

- 7) a) He does not like coffee. He likes tea.
- b) ~~He likes not coffee~~ → He likes tea.
- c) He likes not coffee, but tea (Izutsu, 2008: 668)

- 8) But I told you to leave some for tomorrow (Blakemore, 2000: 479)

Lastly, a variety of translations from English to Spanish of *but* depending on its meaning will be added in this thesis as well. Its role as contrastive, concessive or corrective meaning will be contemplated when translating it into Spanish. Thus, Spanish words as *pero*, *sino* and *aunque* will be analysed as possible translations of *but*.

The introduction of this paper has been eventually presented. What follows is Section 2, where the totality of the information will be fully explained. Analysis of the different classifications of *but* (grammatical category and semantic classification), the feasible idioms which *but* can tolerate, and the translations of *but* into Spanish will be present in the following section. Additionally, a table about the lexical and the semantic roles that *but* may represent will be shown and explained.

2. The Meanings of *but*

2.1 Grammatical Category Classification

But can take the role of a variety of different lexical items. Consequently, it can be classified according to its different categories. *But*, as mentioned in the preceding section, is mainly a coordinator, and, then, a conjunction, as can be shown in 9). Nonetheless, not only can *but* be presented as a conjunction, but it can also be seen as a preposition, as an adverb, and as a noun, although the latter form must solely be accepted when it is used in expressions (exclusively in its plural form). Instance 3) repeated as 10) sheds light on it. Moreover, she suggests that *but* is able to become an adverbial when it can be found either in initial or in final position, as in 11), even though this form of *but* as an end-position adverbial is only found, as the Oxford Dictionary indicates, in Australian English, New Zealand English and informal Scottish, and it is normally considered a replacement of *though*. Finally, as has been mentioned in Section 1, Muñoz de la Nava (2016) refers to the word *but* carrying the form of a correlative coordinator, which is initial-placed in a sentence or in the second conjoint after *not only*, and it allows optional *also* following *but*, as can be illustrated in instance 8) above.

- 9) John is small but Tom is tall (Izutsu, 2008: 658)
- 10) No buts—just get out of here (Oxford Dictionary)
- 11) He was a nice block but (Muñoz de la Nava, 2016: 8)

Furthermore, Quirk et al. (1985) add more grammatical categories which *but* may represent. Apart from those listed above, other possible categories are the following ones: a noun-phrase coordinator, since two or more NPs can be coordinated by *but* in case that contrastivity is needed in the sentence, as can be seen in 12); an adverb, specifically a subjunct, illustrated in 13), which could be replaced by other adverbs, such as *just*. In order to offer an explanation of the role of *but* as a subjunct, it might be pointed out that there are different kinds of subjuncts, and *but* is a downtowner, which means that *but* might lower “the effect on the force of the verb or predication and a wide range of them (downtowners) apply a scale to gradable verbs” (Quirk et al., 1985: 597), and *but* requires the word *all* as an approximator downtowner (which “express(es) an approximation to the force of the verb” (597)), remaining alone as a diminisher downtowner (“the force of the item concerned is limited” (598), and can be replaced by *to a small extent*), as in 4) repeated as 14). Lastly, Izutsu (2008) asserts that *but*, although not being a pronoun itself, can own characteristics of a pronoun through ambiguity, although this ambiguity is avoided when *however* is combined together with *but* or when a context is given, as shown in 15).

- 12) John is not American but British (Izutsu, 2008: 669)
- 13) All you can do is but win the match.
- 14) She all but kissed us (Quirk et al., 1985: 598)
- 15) a) Simon bullied Dave, but (in contrast) Ken sympathized with him.

(him = Dave)

b) Simon bullied Dave, but (nevertheless) Ken sympathized with him.

(him = Simon or Dave)

(Izutsu, 2008: 654)

The information about grammatical categories of *but* has been completed. An in-depth information about diverse semantic roles of *but* will be available in Section 2.2 below.

2.2 Semantic Classification

Even though *but* can be analysed in pragmatic terms, it is more appropriate to be studied through semantics. *But* can be classified into three different semantic roles (Lakoff, 1971; Blakemore, 1987, 1989; Izutsu, 2008), and a fourth one: *but*₄. The various levels of classification receive different names depending on the author, but the names which are going to be used throughout this paper so as to refer to the semantic classification of *but* will be those from Izutsu (2008): contrastive, concessive and corrective, on the grounds of their contemporaneity and easiness to understand.

Following this, firstly, solely two distinctive meanings of *but* were considered: contrastive and concessive (Lakoff, 1971), which were originally known as *semantic opposition* and *denial of expectation*, respectively. Secondly, Blakemore (1987, 1989) goes on with this analysis, but renaming the former to *contrastive* and adding semantic information with respect to truth conditions on sentences and negativity, although this information about truth conditions is not going to be studied in this paper, since it is not the topic of this study. Finally, the semantic roles of *but* were more appropriately renamed by Izutsu (2008) and a new role which was never considered nor analysed before was added: corrective *but*.

2.2.1 Contrastive *but*

The first of these semantic roles to be examined is contrastive *but*. This is the most common of the semantic roles. Two conjuncts need to be opposed one another by using the negative conjunction *but*. According to Lakoff (1971), the two members of the conjunct must be somehow semantically related to one another so as the contrastive *but* to be satisfied. Moreover, these two conjuncts can be reversed in order to verify whether *but* provides contrastivity or not, as can be seen in 16) below; Lakoff designates this *but* as ‘symmetric *but*’.

16) John is rich but dumb. = John is dumb but rich (Lakoff, 1971: 133)

Nonetheless, in this kind of sentences where two conjuncts are opposed, especially when there are opposite adjectives, *but* is possible to be replaced by *and*. Kitis (1995) suggests that *and* should have preference over *but* as the latter is the “prototypical correlative or contrastive connective” (377), whereas *and* is an emotional device which registers the speaker’s involvement. Nevertheless *but* is more usual to be used over *and* due to, in Lakoff’s words, a “combination of similarity and difference” which “allows the use of *but*” (132). What is more, Blakemore & Carston (1999) claim that Kitis’s reason of the preference of using *and* over *but* is roughly true. Instead, the emphasis should be placed not on the conjunction *and* and its effects, but actually on the conjunction itself, which increases these attitudinal properties.

17) a) She’s seeing other men and her husband is in hospital

b) She’s seeing other men but her husband is in hospital

(Blakemore & Carston, 1999: 581)

Following this, Blakemore (1987, 1989) states that *but* has the property to contradict and delete a proposition in the light of the speaker’s belief and deduction

about this proposition. Blakemore calls this phenomenon *communicative behaviour*. Similar to Blakemore's point, Kitis (1995) disagrees with Blakemore by providing an analysis of the contradict-and-delete effect of *but*. In this case, Kitis describes this phenomenon as a 'back-tracking' property that, in contrast with *and*, *but* owns. This can be noticed in 17) b) repeated and reformulated below according to this back-tracking property.

(She's seeing other men) but her husband is in hospital

→ "She's seeing other men" is contradicted and eliminated.

In order to add different analyses at this stage, Rouchota (1990) concludes that *but* somehow contributes to the truth conditional content in any of the meanings that *but* can carry, and, therefore, "*but* is considered to be truth-conditionally equivalent to *and*" (65). Furthermore, Rouchota goes against Blakemore's consideration that *but* in the sentences in 18) carries a contrastive meaning. Rouchota suggests that what really makes *but* carry a contrastive meaning is the antonym of the adjectives (70-1). Lastly, *but* must be considered to own the semantic information of additivity, similar to words such as *and* or *also* (Umbach, 2005). Sentence 19) below sheds new light on it.

18) a) John is small, but Tom is tall (Izutsu, 2008: 658)

b) John is small. Tom is tall.

c) John is small, and Tom is tall.

19) a) John is rich and dumb (Lakoff, 1971: 133)

b) John is rich, but (also) dumb.

In terms of contrastive *but*, Blakemore (1987) states that it is able to make contrast between exclusively two different elements, although Izutsu (2008) strongly

disagrees, since more than two elements are perfectly possible to be contrasted between them, as can be shown in the following illustration.

20) John played football, Mary played tennis, but Alice stayed at home

(Quirk et al., 1985: 925)

On the whole, Izutsu argues that two propositions must be mutually exclusive in order to make contrast possible. In other words, they cannot have the same topic. If they share the same topic, they do not make contrast but similarity instead, as is appreciated in the sentences in 21). Thus, contrastive sentences must follow two basic rules: first, their propositions must be mutually exclusive; and second, their propositions must be explicitly differentiated.

21) a) John is rich, and Tom is rich, too (Izutsu, 2008: 660)

b) ??John is rich, but Tom is rich.

c) John is rich, but Tom is poor.

2.2.2 Concessive *but*

The second semantic role to be analysed is concessive *but*. It is referred to, a Lakoff (1971) explains, as a case of denied presuppositions. Namely, one proposition describes a case which is presumably unexpected by the hearer in comparison with the other proposition. So as to give an example, concessive *but* in a sentence is clarified in 22) below. The point in this illustration is that basketball players might be thought to be tall in order to be talented players, which is a clear presupposed cliché. Moreover, Lakoff decides to label this role ‘asymmetric *but*’ on account of its lack of reversibility, unlike contrastive *but*. Additionally, Lakoff claims that a sentence is possible to have

two semantic roles (contrastive and concessive) simultaneously and, thus, be ambiguous, as is represented in 23).

22) John is tall, but he's no good at basketball (Lakoff, 1971: 133)

23) John is rich but dumb (Lakoff, 1971: 133)

Izutsu (2008) divides concessive *but* into two different classifications according to its directness between the assumptions in a sentence. On the one hand, direct concessive sentences are able to be formulated as 'if S1, (then normally) not S2', as presented in 22) cited above. On the other hand, indirect concessive sentences are the result of two propositions in different assumptions. According to Izutsu, a formula to understand this type of semantic role is what follows, 'if S1, (then normally) C' and 'if S2, (then normally) not C', where S means *sentence*, and C means *content*. A representation of this formula is shown in instance 24).

24) a) If the car is stylish and spacious, we should buy it.

b) If the car expensive, we should not buy it.

c) Thus → The car is stylish and expensive, but it is expensive.

(Izutsu, 2008: 665)

Returning to contrastive *but*, Lakoff (1971) claims that, even though the sentence might sound strange, contrastive *but* can be replaced by *although*. By contrast, it cannot be replaced in the case of the concessive sentences when they have to do with a desire.

25) a) Although John is poor, he is happy (Izutsu, 2008: 662)

b) John is poor, but he is happy.

c) *Although John is poor, he would be happy.

Furthermore, *but* can be used when a proposition contains semantic information about the other one in a sentence. This is a case of deduction. This form of *but* "is actually the product of the *and* that conjoins two instances of the performative verb of saying, plus presupposition involving these verbs of saying" (Lakoff, 1971: 141).

26) George likes Peking Duck, but all linguists are fond of Chinese food (Lakoff, 1971: 138)

With regard to substitutions of *but*, *although* sounds more natural if it replaces concessive *but* rather than contrastive *but*. On the whole, it is not possible to replace it when making contrast.

27) a) Although John is poor, he is happy (Izutsu, 2008: 662)

b) *Although John is rich, he is dumb.

c) John is rich but dumb (Lakoff, 1971: 133).

Lakoff strongly suggests that the replacement of concessive *but* (and not corrective *but*) by *although* may be due to asymmetric *but* being the second proposition presupposed from the context, as in example 27) a). On the other hand, symmetric *but* can be replaced by *while* on the grounds that these propositions are not presupposed, but asserted.

28) While John is small, Tom is tall.

Finally, Lakoff proves that concessive *but* may occasionally be problematic. The illustrations in 29) confirm this observation. If a gangster kills a person, then the most logical thought is that s/he is going to be arrested, or at least that should be the most common expectation. Subsequently, if the gangster runs away, *but* is effectively used in 29) a), since not being arrested (and, therefore, running away) would deny that

expectation. Nonetheless, the problem arrives when 29) b) is examined from a concessive point of view. As the expectation is clearly the gangster to be arrested, this assumption is not denied. Then, the semantic role of this *but* remains in the dark, and Lakoff cannot give an answer.

29) a) The murderer kidnapped a person, but ran away.

b) The murderer kidnapped a person, but was arrested by the police.

(Lakoff, 1971: 140)

2.2.3 Corrective *but*

Corrective *but* is the third semantic role, and it is, historically, one of the least studied of the four semantic roles, as, albeit previous research studies this third semantic role, it was not until Izutsu's work in 2008 that it started to be seriously taken into consideration. Corrective sentences are made up of one proposition which is made invalid by the negation carried out by *but*, followed by a consequent second proposition provided as an alternative option. Additionally, Umbach (2005) prefers to describe the nature of corrective *but* as exclusive, like in the word *only*. A clear example of corrective *but* is 30) below.

30) John is not American but British (Izutsu, 2008: 649)

Additionally, there are, according to Izutsu, two different manners to express corrective *but*, the first of which is the standard one, mentioned previously. Besides this former method, 31) is, according to Izutsu, a "propositional negation", and a "negative assertion" is accordingly produced (668). That is to say, both propositions are valid,

even though the first one is a negative proposition and the second one is a positive proposition.

31) John isn't American, but he is British.

Apart from these two methods, corrective sentences need to share the same topic in their assumptions, such as that of nationality in example 32) below. Albeit the grammaticality of a corrective sentence is not conditioned by this point, they do need this sharing of topic so as to be felicitous. It would be needless to mention that they must designate different concepts of the same topic as well (Izutsu, 2008), which can be appreciated in 32) c).

32) a) John is not American but British (Izutsu, 2008: 649)

b) *John is not American, but right-handed.

c) *John is not American, but American.

As a summary of the overall point as regards corrective *but*, the following two basic rules are needed to be satisfied, according to Izutsu: (1) their two propositions must be mutually exclusive, and (2) two propositions are sharing the same topic "before and after removal/relocation" (671). Moreover, *but* needs explicit negative in a sentence, but these negative effects cannot come from morphological derivation, as is appreciated below (# indicates that the sentence is pragmatically anomalous).

33) a) It is not likely but certain (Izutsu, 2008: 654)

b) #It is unlike but certain.

In order to analyse the three main semantic roles, they are going to be compared from Izutsu's perspective. The three of them have a similarity: their propositions must be mutually exclusive. Unlike concessive and corrective *but*, contrastive *but* is able to have more than two propositions sharing the same topic. However, concessive *but* has

(and needs) at least one assumption, whereas contrastive sentences cannot own any assumptions. Furthermore, unlike contrastive and concessive sentences, corrective sentences do not need any assumptions, and do not maintain the validity of the propositions, for the first of them may be rejected through negation. What is more, Izutsu shows that ambiguity between concessive and corrective *but* is possible, unless the sentence includes *rather* or *instead*.

- 34) a) Mary is not stupid but ugly.
b) Mary is (not stupid), but (ugly). (concessive)
c) Mary is not (stupid), but (ugly). (corrective)
d) Mary is not stupid, but *rather/instead* ugly (Izutsu, 2008: 652)

2.2.4 But₄

As mentioned above, Muñoz de la Nava (2016) insists that a fourth semantic role might be possible to be taken by *but*. This meaning is referred to it as but₄, and, according to Muñoz de la Nava, it may appear in initial position in a sentence, or after a conjoint beginning with *not only*. Also, the most valid grammatical category of but₄ is a correlative coordinator, since it coordinates two propositions together, even if the previous sentence comes from another speaker and the sentence headed by *but* is, thus, the continuation of the conversation, as can be seen in instances 35) and 8) repeated below as 36). Moreover, *also* is common to be used, particularly when *not only* is present.

35) (During a conversation about a trip)

But I wanted to go to Debenhams first (Blakemore, 2000: 473)

36) But I told you to leave some for tomorrow (Blakemore, 2000: 479)

Having analysed the entirety of the semantic classification of *but*, and before the end of Section 2.2, the following table below is shown. The purpose of this table is to clarify the possible semantic roles that each grammatical category may represent.

Grammatical Category	Semantic Role(s)
Conjunction	Contrastive, Concessive, Corrective
Preposition	Corrective
Adverb	∅
Noun	∅
Pronoun	Contrastive
Correlative coordinator	But ₄
Adverbial	∅

Table 1. Grammatical categories and semantic roles that *but* can take.

In Table 1, a list of the categories which *but* can take is shown in the left column, whereas in the right column the possible semantic roles that each category may own are catalogued. This table is going to be described in the following paragraphs.

On the one hand, the grammatical category with more semantic roles is that of conjunction, which may be found as contrastive, concessive or corrective *but*. Then, both *but* as a pronoun and as a preposition are able to stand for one semantic role each, contrastive and corrective, respectively. The case of *but* as a correlative coordinator is a special one. Even though this kind of coordinator would be included as a subtype of a conjunction, I decided to list it separately on the grounds that it can own the properties of but₄, that is, a fourth semantic role of *but* which cannot be labelled as any of the other three categories and is located in initial position in a sentence.

On the other hand, *but* as an adverbial, as an adverb and as a noun are not tagged with any of semantic role on the grounds that their features do not tolerate it. Adverbials

differ from adverbs in that the former, although being adverbs themselves, they often stay at the end of a sentence, describing or modifying the lexical verb, whereas adverbs modify a larger number of categories (such as adjectives and other adverbs). Since *but* as an adverbial is merely a substitution of *though* or *however*, it does not own any of the mentioned semantic roles, and the same happens to *but* as an adverb, which functions as a subjunct. Finally, *but* as a noun is solely used in expressions and, thus, cannot carry a semantic role.

Examples:

Conjunction:

37) John is rich but dumb (Lakoff, 1971: 133)

This is an example of a contrastive sentence, in which *but* is a conjunction, since conjunctions can join two words, phrases or clauses.

38) John is rich, but he is happy (Quirk et al., 1985: 935)

This sentence is another example of *but* as a conjunction, although this time it functions as a concessive *but*.

39) John is not American but British (Izutsu, 2008: 649)

This third sentence is an illustration of the third and last possible function of *but* as a conjunction. This instance shows a corrective sentence.

Preposition:

40) All but the captain were rescued (Quirk et al., 1985: 707)

But here functions as a preposition because it is replacing the word *excepting*, which is a preposition as well.

Adverb:

41) She all but kissed us (Quirk et al., 1985: 598)

In this illustration, *but* is used as an adverb, more specifically as a subjunct. It can be substituted by other adverbs, such as *just*.

Noun:

42) No buts—just get out of here (Oxford Dictionary)

But can also be seen as a noun, although this category must only be taken when it is used in expressions and exclusively in its plural form.

Pronoun:

43) Simon bullied Dave, but Ken sympathized with him.

In this case, *but* can own properties of a pronoun through ambiguity. Nevertheless, this ambiguity is avoided when a word such as *however* and *nevertheless* is combined together with *but* or when a context is given. This example above is totally ambiguous, as we are not able to know who is beaten by George, it could be either Jack or David.

Correlative coordinator:

44) But I told you to leave some for tomorrow (Blakemore, 2000: 479)

In this instance, *but* is carrying the form of an adversative coordinator, which is in initial position in a sentence or in the second conjoint after *not only*, and it allows optional *also* following *but*.

Adverbial:

45) He was a nice block but (Muñoz de la Nava, 2016: 8)

But is able to represent an adverbial when it can be found either in initial or in final position. However, this form of *but* as an end-position adverbial is solely found in Australian English, New Zealand English and informal Scottish, and it is normally considered a replacement of *though*.

After having described and analysed the different semantic roles of *but*, Section 2.2 has eventually arrived to its end. The different idioms with *but* which can be found will be explained in the following section.

2.3 Idioms with *but*

In this section a list of idioms, that is to say, two or more words which are put together and provide an additional meaning, in this case with the word *but*, will be discussed. The totality of the words which accompany *but* are adverbs; these are: *nevertheless*, *still*, *however*, *rather*, *instead*, *now*, *then* and *perhaps* (Blakemore & Carston, 1999; Izutsu, 2008).

Blakemore & Carston (1999) point out that *but*, *nevertheless* and *still* are considered markers of contrastivity, and these two adverbs can be combined with the former. This, however, makes *nevertheless* and *still* simultaneously distinct from *but*.

46) a) She's quite intelligent.

b) But nevertheless she's not really what the department needs at the moment.

(Blakemore, 2000: 479)

47) But still, I don't suppose he'll break his leg (Blakemore & Carston, 1999: 10)

Notwithstanding, following Blakemore & Carston's point, *nevertheless* and *still* are not always capable to replace *but* on the grounds that these two adverbs, in contrast with *but*, do not have the back-tracking property of contradicting and eliminating a proposition mentioned in Section 2.2.1, in which *but* is suggested to have the property of deleting a proposition which has been contradicted in the sentence. In the same vein, and focusing more deeply on *nevertheless*, it indicates contrastive information about the context, whereas *but* indicates contrastive information about the effects of the context. Namely, *but* contains the "contextual effects of the utterance it precedes" (482). *But* and *nevertheless* can be combined together solely when both constraints are satisfied.

48) But I told you to leave some for tomorrow.

49) ?Nevertheless/Still, I told you to leave some for tomorrow.

(Blakemore, 2000: 479)

Along similar lines, Izutsu (2008) expands the possibilities by including *however*, *rather*, *instead*, *now*, *then* and *perhaps* to the list of idioms with *but*. As has been previously mentioned, Izutsu relies on the argument that *rather* and *instead* are used to avoid ambiguity between concessive and corrective sentences. Similarly, *however* may avoid ambiguity with *but* as a pronoun, which is noticed in the illustration 15) from Section 2.1 repeated below as 50).

50) a) Simon bullied Dave, but (in contrast) Ken sympathized with him.

(him = Dave)

b) Simon bullied Dave, but (nevertheless) Ken sympathized with him.

(him = Simon or Dave)

(Izutsu, 2008: 654)

Finally, temporal adverbs *then* and *now* are argued to appear only when *but* takes place in initial position. Furthermore, a contrastive meaning is always carried by *but then*, regardless of the context. Likewise, there is every likelihood that *but still* allows only concessive meaning. As *perhaps* is known to denote possibility, *but perhaps* is an idiom which carries information of possibility as opposed to contrast and, thus, the meaning of *perhaps* takes preference over *but*. Regardless of the popular belief of an idiom as an expression, what makes these strings of words result in an idiom and not in a collocation or other linguistic occurrence is precisely this preference of meaning of one word over the other (and, consequently, the elimination of one meaning), as is illustrated by *but perhaps*.

51) A spark of pale gold drops over the trees in the distance, but then I sway on my feet (Muñoz de la Nava, 2016: 22)

52) But still, I don't suppose he'll break his leg (Blakemore & Carston, 1999: 10)

53) I don't think it's my birthday, but perhaps an anniversary (Muñoz de la Nava, 2016: 24)

Having mentioned, explained and illustrated the possible idioms with *but*, this section is finished. In order to complete Section 2, the diverse translations of *but* into Spanish will be available in the following section.

2.4 Translations of *but* into Spanish

In order to successfully translate *but* into a Romance language, an aspect needs to be highlighted in advance. In contrast with Spanish, *but* does not lexicalize any difference between contrastive/concessive and corrective *but* in English. Conversely, Spanish speakers refer to its contrastive and concessive use as *pero*, but they use the

word *sino* so as to refer to the corrective role. Besides, a synonym of *pero*, even though it is not usually utilized in present-day Spanish, is *mas*, and it can always substitute *pero*, regardless of its semantic role. Accordingly, as Muñoz de la Nava (2016) states, Spanish *pero*, *sino* and *mas* are the adversative coordinators which correspond to the English adversative coordinator *but*.

54) a) John is rich but dumb (Lakoff, 1971: 133)

b) John es rico pero tonto.

55) a) John is rich, but he is happy (Quirk et al., 1985: 935)

b) Jon es rico, pero es feliz.

56) a) John is not American but British (Izutsu, 2008: 649)

b) John no es estadounidense, sino británico.

Moreover, concessive *but* can be translated as *aunque* and *si bien*, which are labelled by la Real Academia de la Lengua Española (RAE) (2010) as subordinator conjunctions which own concessive meaning, as illustrated in 55). What is more, an adversative value is still carried in *si bien*, and especially in *aunque*. Thus, *pero* can be often replaced by *aunque* and *si bien*, either in its contrastive and concessive form. Notwithstanding, this *aunque*, as Muñoz de la Nava underlines, is distinct from adversative *aunque* used to express contrast “in the sense that the two stand at opposite extremes of the gradient” (27).

In the same vein, la RAE points out that *pero* can be in initial position in a sentence as a discursive connector. Therefore, *pero* is a suitable translation for the semantic role of *but*₄, and, in order to support this point, Muñoz de la Nava suggests the idiom *pero si* as an emphatic connotation in initial position.

57) Aunque/si bien no parece lógico, ¿no crees? (Muñoz de la Nava, 2016: 28)

58) ¡Pero si no estaba haciendo nada! (RAE, 2010: 2454)

Along similar lines, *pero* is possible to be found at the end of a sentence, that is to say, with the role of and adverbial. In spite of being archaic in the present-day Spanish, la RAE maintains that adverbial *pero* is preserved in Peruvian Spanish, but not in Castilian Spanish.

59) Vienes temprano, pero (RAE, 2010: 2458)

As regards of corrective *but*, the most suitable translation into Spanish is the coordinator conjunction *sino*, yet it forces negativity to the first conjoint, either implicitly or explicitly. An instance on the translation of the corrective role of *but* is present in 56) above.

Nonetheless, when *but* is carrying a meaning of exception, namely, it takes the lexical category of a preposition or a conjunction with an exclusion meaning, then it may be translated as *salvo* or *excepto*. This meaning is not classified into any of the semantic roles studied in this paper, since this form of *but* does not follow the same features due to its need to be a preposition or to belong to a negative sentence. Lastly, sometimes it is even correct to omit the word, that is, to merely remove the word and do not translate it, as in 61).

60) a) All but the captain were rescued (Quirk et al., 1985: 707)

b) Todos salvo/excepto el capitán fueron rescatados.

61) a) It can't be too long, but mustn't be too short.

b) Que no sea ni demasiado largo (_) ni demasiado corto.

Having discussed the possible translations of *but* into Spanish, not only is this subsection eventually completed, but also the totality of Section 2. An exploration of the full extent of the meanings of *but* has been carried out in this paper. The following section will offer conclusions of this paper.

3. Conclusion

To bring this paper to an end, the conclusion to be drawn is that the word *but* is able to take several meanings, since the meanings that are associated in present-day English are mere instances of their totality. This study set out the examination of the roles that *but* may carry out according to its grammatical category and its semantic role, taking into consideration both its current and past meanings. As a result, this paper may be considered to have analysed the meanings of *but* regarding its semantic evolution from the past onwards. By examining the idioms listed, as well as the translations of *but* into Spanish, this study might be thought as an explanatory list of the grammatical and semantic information of *but*.

The word *but* can take more forms and have more meanings than it is popularly thought. From conjugating sentences to representing exception, it can be used to express several meanings; it can even be seen as a noun. What is more, *but* has distinct semantic roles, and, interestingly, *but* as a conjunction includes all of them. The totality of these meanings is included in merely one word, whereas other languages normally need different words to express these meanings.

Notwithstanding, further research is needed in order to clarify the nature of *but* as an exclusive word, since *but* is known to be able to substitute *except* or *only*, but the information on this issue is considerably limited. Moreover, there is the situation where concessive *but* is problematic, mentioned in illustration 29) in Section 2.2.2, which concludes that concessive *but* requires to be studied more deeply so as to come up with a solution to this question.

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